

Minister tells JS 1445 educational institutions brought under MPO

Education Minister A S H K Sadeque told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the government had brought 1445 educational institutions under Money Payment Order (MPO) during the 1998-99 fiscal, reports BSS.

Replying to a starred question by opposition BNP lawmaker from Noakhali-6, M Fazul Azim, the minister said the educational institutions which have been brought under MPO included schools, colleges and madrasahs.

He said remaining educational institutions would be brought under the MPO in phases on the basis of availability of budget allocations in the coming fiscal and on fulfillment of conditions incorporated in the guidelines in this regard.

In reply to a supplementary by Jatiya Party MP from Nilphamari-1 N K Alam Chowdhury, the minister said there is a guideline for inclusion of educational institutions under MPO. Recommendations from local parliament members are also taken into account while granting MPO, he added.

Session jams to removed in 12 years

Session jams in the universities — mainly blamed on campus unrest — will be removed within next two years, says Education Minister A H K Sadeque, reports UNB.

Replying to a question in Parliament yesterday, the minister said that during the present government's times campus terrorism had been eliminated. "I hope session jams will also be removed through taking exams on time."

He informed the House that during the present five-year plan 6 universities would be set up while another 6 under the next plan.

However, responding to another question, he said that over the five years beginning from 2002, the government would set up more 12 science and technology universities.

These varieties will be set up in the old district headquarters where there are none at present.

JS told Orphanages of Hindu community get capitation grant of govt

State Minister for Social Welfare Dr Mozammel Hossain told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that 14 non-government orphanages earmarked only for the orphans of the Hindu community get capitation grants from the government, reports BSS.

Replying to a starred question by opposition BNP lawmaker Advocate Gautam Chakravarty from Tangail-6, the minister said the orphans belonging to all religious communities have equal rights to enjoy the facilities of the government-run orphanages.

He said keeping this in view, separate orphanages were not set up for any particular religious community.

Shaheda Obaid demands better treatment for her husband

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Shaheda Obaid, wife of BNP leader KM Obaidur Rahman who is an accused in the Jail Killing Case, has strongly protested the shifting of her husband to jail from the hospital.

In a statement Thursday, she demanded immediate shifting of her husband back to the hospital for treatment as he is suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and heart ailment.

Shaheda issued the press statement after she visited her husband at Dhaka Central Jail on Thursday. She reportedly found her husband very sick and said that he needed better treatment.

She said KM Obaidur Rahman, Nurul Islam Manjur and Shah Mozammel Hossain had been taken to the prison cell of the hospital as per the instruction of the High Court.

Four arrested, firearms seized in Ctg

From Our Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 6: Thana and detective police of Chittagong City recovered firearms and explosive and held four persons in this connection here yesterday and today.

Chandgaon thana police acting on a tip, recovered one LC saw-off gun, 10 rounds of bullets and a big dagger from a house at Road No. 1 of Chandgaon R/A under the thana in the late hours yesterday.

Police also held two other persons in this connection. The arrested were, Zahedul Islam and Zabhed. The former has some criminal cases against him.

In another raid at the Daxminpara of South Potenga under Bondar thana detective police recovered 75 bottles of wine and 375 cans of beer in the early morning today.

In yet another drive detective police recovered 10 cock-tails from a house at Terri Bazar under Kotali thana and arrested one Kulu and one Sohel in this connection at around 6 am today.



Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury presiding over a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. Leader of the House Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present. — PID photo

Minister, opposition MPs debate over existence of universities

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a mini debate during the question-answer session after the Education Minister declared that not a single university had been established after 1975.

A S H K Sadeque told this after BNP MP Mashur Rahman said that thousands of meritorious students are not getting opportunities of higher education due to shortage of seats of existing universities and wanted to know from the minister whether the government had any plans to expand the sector for higher education.

In reply Minister Sadeque said all the successive governments after 1975 hadn't set up any university in the country.

BNP MP Abdul Wahad stood up and asked the minister to say how many universities had been established during the period of 1972-75 and 1996-99.

The Education Minister said the question of setting up of

universities cannot arise at all because the then Awami League government was busy with reconstructing the country that was destroyed with the Liberation War.

He said the present AL government will set up six universities in the current five-year plan and another six in next five-year plan.

Another BNP lawmaker Abu Yusuf Mohammad Khallur Rahman said: "I think the Education Minister is unaware when the Islamic University in Kushtia, Khulna University, Shahjalal University in Sylhet and a number of medical colleges have been set up during the BNP regime. Besides, the BNP allowed to set up private universities and medical colleges."

The minister then stood up again to reply "not a single university, excepting Kushtia, Khulna and Shahjalal were set up during the 21-year after 1975."



Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Minister for Forest and Environment inaugurated a fortnight long tree plantation programme on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Tree plantation drive launched at DU

By DU Correspondent

Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday urged the countrymen to plant as many trees as possible to preserve an environment-friendly atmosphere in the country.

Blaming the previous governments for not taking initiatives to contain environment pollution, she said that the environment of our country had become worse only due to our carelessness.

The earlier governments cut trees relentlessly, particularly in Dhaka city but they did not feel the importance of planting a single tree," Sajeda Chowdhury said while addressing a discussion on the Dhaka University campus yesterday afternoon.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of ruling Awami League organised the discussion as part of their 15-day long tree plantation programme on the campus on the occasion of World Environment Day.

She expressed concern over the increasing environment pollution in the country and

said, "If we want to save the country we must work for an environment-friendly atmosphere."

Sajeda Chowdhury also said that forests are needed on 25 per cent of all land area for ecological balance, but the proportion in our country is only five to six per cent.

Highlighting various steps by the Awami League government to contain environment pollution, she said that they would do everything for ecological balance in the country.

The forest minister later planted a tree on the campus and declared inauguration of BCL's programme to plant 5,000 trees in and around the campus. She urged the BCL activists to take part in countrywide tree plantation programme.

Presided over by DU unit of BCL president Sajjad Hossain, the function was addressed by Bahadur Bepari, Ajay Kar, Khokan and A K M Ajim.

On the first day yesterday, BCL planted some 5,000 trees around the Haji Mohammad Mohsin and Kabi Jashim Uddin halls.

Manju blasts govt decision Handing WRIP to UNOCAL not in people's interests

By Staff Correspondent

Nazim Rahman Manju, Secretary General of a faction of Jatiya Party (Ershad) in a statement yesterday blasted the government for awarding Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) to US company UNOCAL by ignoring experts opinion.

The JP secretary general identified the local agent for UNOCAL as a close associate of an influential minister of the government and said, "The minister for his own interest has played a vital role to approve the WRIP for UNOCAL despite expert opinion to the contrary."

He said, "People of the country would not accept such an 'imbalanced' contract."

Manju also said, "The government had pledged to construct a fertiliser factory, a 210 Megawatt power station and to connect Bhola with the national grid through a 132 kilovolt transmission line to distribute surplus power at different parts of the country by using gas found at the district. But now instead they were handing over the WRIP to UNOCAL ig-

noring the people's interests." The JP leader called upon the government on behalf of the inhabitants of Bhola district to construct the promised fertiliser factory, power station and transmission line.

He also urged the government to review the "controversial" treaty with UNOCAL with a review committee and experts and to make a fresh contract.

2 hurt in Magura clash

MAGURA, June 6: A clash between workers of Rural Electrification Board (REB) and villagers left 10 people injured in Raipura village under Mohammadpur thana today, reports UNB.

Police and villagers said the clash ensued when REB workers were cutting branches of trees which fell over some electric cable lines and owners of the trees resisted them.

Out of the injured, 2 villagers and two REB employees were admitted to Health Complex.

Flood control project in Chalan Beel area yet to be implemented

RAJSHAHI, June 6: Flood Control and Drainage Project in the Chalan Beel area stretching from Natore to Rajshahi could not be implemented even after last 25 years due to lack of necessary fund and bureaucratic bottlenecks, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, the donor agencies lost their interests regarding the proposed Tk 200 crore project launched by Water Development Board (WDB) with financial assistance from World Food Programme and International Monetary Fund (IMF), sources said.

Water Development Board launched the project in the fiscal 1973-74 to protect crops on 3.21 lakh acres land of eight thanas in the area from the on-

rush of floodwaters, sources added.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) also did not show any interest after examining the survey report of the project.

Water Development Board sources said the government had undertaken a plan to construct 298 km dam, 24 regulators, 58 flashing inlet, 55 bridges, 132 culverts and dig 187 canals with an estimated cost of about Tk 43.66 crore.

For implementing the project properly, the total area of the project had been divided into four polders, which included Bhagura and Chatmora of Pabna district, Borairam, Gurudaspur and Singra of Natore district, Alrai and

Manda of Naogaon district and Tanor, Baghmara, Mohanpur of Rajshahi district.

After completion of the first phase work spending Tk 43 crore, the authorities concerned stopped further allocation of fund on the plea of constructing two sluice-gates by WDB in unplanned way at Charghat in Rajshahi and Nandakunja in Naogaon in 1984. As a result, the work of the project came to a halt in 1989.

Meanwhile, another project proposal was accepted in 1991 with the aim of constructing 57 km water sewerage canal, 16 regulators, 57 flashing inlet, 171 km road, four bridges and 47 culverts. But that also could not see the light of the day.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina seen with Foreign Minister Samad Azad and his wife Nili Khan at their wedding reception at Parliament Club auditorium last night. It was attended by members of parliament, diplomats and other elite of the city. — Star photo by Amran Hossain

Its a little bit relief Over 4 lakh elderly people get old-age allowance

More than four lakh distressed elderly people, who had been suffering from tremendous economic crises for decades, have now started getting a little bit of relief having monthly old-age allowances introduced by the present government, reports BSS.

In a landmark decision, the government for the first time, introduced the allowance, for the elderly people, especially for the old women, who have lost their working capability due to physical condition.

An official estimate showed that Taka 62.50 crore had been disbursed so far for the old age allowance among 403,110 people throughout the country from the inception of the project in 1998.

A total of Taka 12.50 crore had been distributed among the distressed old men and women in the last 1997-98 fiscal.

According to available statistics, Taka 50 crore was sanctioned in the current financial year beginning a new chapter of welfare mission sponsored by the government.

Director General of Social Welfare Directorate Mir Shahabuddin said the programme is going on in 40,311 wards of 4,479 unions under the country's 64 districts. At present, at least 10 persons in a ward are getting the allowance," he said, adding "of the total, 50 per cent are female."

He said the persons have 57 years age are getting preferences.

"We have distributed 'pass books' to them for ensuring smooth disbursement of the allowances from the Sonali Bank," he said while talking to BSS.

As per government policy, he explained, the programme is being implemented in the rural areas in the country.

Replying to a question, he said a field-level committee headed by local union parishad chairman was formed to select the old and distressed persons in this regard.

"Thana-level committee headed by Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) gives the final approval after the primary selection of the field-level committee," he said explaining the new programme announced by the government.

He categorically said that the committees were formed to ensure transparency and accountability for selecting right persons in this regard. Local elite and people's representatives are the members of the field-level committee, while social welfare officer is the member-secretary of the thana-level committee," he added.

Referring to different 'hazards' in drawing the allowance from the Sonali Bank of thana headquarters, he said the government is actively considering to disburse the money from the nearest nationalised bank branches to remove the 'hazards'.



Purna Das Baul to perform in city today

Liberation War Museum will hold a cultural programme today in observance of 50 years of Purna Das Baul in the world music, says a press release.

World renowned Baul exponent Purna Das Baul also known as the Baul Samrat will perform at the cultural extravaganza organised by the Museum in which local artists will also participate.

Purna Das Baul played a significant role during the war of liberation in 1971 by organising western pop stars to play charity concerts to raise funds for the freedom fighters. Purna Das Baul has won a large number of awards for his work. They include Benares Music Conference's Baul Ratna in 1952, Baul Sheramati in 1958 from Allahabad, Baul Samrat in 1967 etc.

The cultural programme will be held at the Cafe Theatre at the Museum at 7.00 pm.

President, PM greet Swedish King, PM

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday felicitated King Carl XVI Gustaf on the occasion of the National Day of Sweden, reports BSS.

In a message to the Swedish King, the President said, "the National Day of Sweden gives me great pleasure to convey to you my sincere greetings and felicitations."

"I am confident that the existing bonds of friendship and mutual cooperation between the two countries will be further strengthened and consolidated in the years to come," he said. The President wished the king good personal health, happiness and long life and the friendly people of Sweden continued peace, progress and prosperity.

In a separate message Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted her Swedish counterpart Goran Persson on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Sweden, reports BSS.

"On behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh and my own behalf, I have the pleasure to extend to you and the people of Sweden our heartfelt greetings and warmest felicitations on the occasion of the National Day," she said in a message to the Swedish Prime Minister.

"I hope that the existing friendly relations and close cooperation between our two countries will be further strengthened in the coming years," the Prime Minister said.

She wished Persson good health and happiness and continued peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Sweden.

PDB chairman visits Ashuganj Power Complex

Chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) Quamrul Islam Siddique yesterday urged the board officials to take initiatives to detect the problems and then the steps for solving themselves, reports BSS.

He said, "We must acquire technical knowledge and should ensure its execution if we really want to be self-reliant."

The PDB Chairman was talking to the officials of Ashuganj Power Complex during his visit to the complex and its units.

Senior PDB officials and professors of BUET Dr Taher Ali, Dr Ehsan and Dr Golam Mohiuddin were present. Siddique stressed the need for ensuring proficiency through self-discipline in their respective fields.

Human resource training programme would be taken for qualitative improvement of PDB employees and their expertise.

The PDB Chairman directed the officials concerned to solve the technical problems of Ashuganj Power Station.

Discharge duty with honesty, new Naval Chief tells navymen

The new Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Abu Taher, yesterday called upon the naval personnel to discharge their duties with honesty, sincerity, discipline and patriotism, an ISPR press release said, reports BSS.

He made the call in his inaugural speech to the officers, sailors and civilian personnel of the naval headquarters and Dhaka naval area at a parade at BNS Haji Mohsin parade square, Dhaka Cantonment, after taking over his duties.

Admiral Taher asked them to achieve the highest professional standard through continuous training and exercise and perform the onerous task imposed on them by the nation.

Reminding them of the services rendered by the navy personnel to advance the country's economy in the marine area and mitigating the sufferings of the people during disasters and cyclones for which the navy has achieved confidence and respect of the nation and government, he advised them to work hard to up keep the tradition of the Bangladesh Navy with new zeal and spirit.

Earlier, chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Abu Taher visited the Shikha Anirban at the Dhaka Cantonment. He placed floral wreaths at the memorial to pay homage to the memory of the martyred Armed Forces men in the War of Liberation in 1971.

Principal staff officers, senior officers and navy personnel were also present.

1 killed, 25 hurt in road mishap in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, June 6: One person was killed and 25 others injured in a road accident at Dhali, about three kilometre away from Phulphur thana headquarters on Mymensingh-Haluaghat highway on Friday, reports BSS.

Witnesses said, the accident occurred when a Haluaghat-bound truck knocked down a Mymensingh-bound bus from Haluaghat. The bus skidded off the road leaving one Marfat Ali (35) injured seriously. Later Marfat Ali succumbed to his injuries at the Phulphur Thana Health Complex.

Six of the injured were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and the rest released after first aid.

The drivers of both the ill-fated vehicles fled after the accident.

FBCCI chief

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can compete with the neighbouring economies, he added. He went on: Businessperson should not pay for the inefficiency of the system and lack of infrastructure facilities.

Citing an example, Mintoo said people here have to pay Tk 81 per cent to the USA when Indians spend an equivalent of Tk 40 only, for the same purpose. Investors here have to pay high for all public utilities.

Stressing the need for employment generation, MCCI president Mahubul Jamil said if incentives like five percent cash incentive on the FOB (Freight on Board) value of exports, as enjoyed by the garment industry, were given to other industries, new industries will be set up, export items will increase and jobs will be created. He suggested creation of an "Export Sustenance Fund" or a "Dual Exchange Rate" as alternatives to devaluation.

EPB Vice-Chairman Anwarul Bar Chowdhury said traditional items represented 97 per cent of exports and non-traditional products three per cent in the early years of independence, while today the process has been totally reversed: Non-traditional items account for 92 percent of exports and traditional products represent only eight per cent.

Speaking at the function, business leaders urged for long-term policy support instead of temporary measures to boost the country's exports.

Stressing the need for diversification of products and market for the growth of export, they also emphasised on evolving measures to protect local industries and investment and expansion of the domestic market.

Prof Rehman Sobhan emphasised on product as well as market diversification and stressed the need for the growth of both the industrial sectors — garments and others.

Presenting his keynote paper, DCCI President MH Rahman said in spite of spectacular export growth in recent years, the export base and market, both have are extremely limited.

Rahman said in order to achieve ambitious objective and target of the export policy, the government has provided a number of incentives and facilities but this will not bring the desired result as the environment is not enabling.

Manufacturers face unfair competition in the domestic market from dumping of imports as well as smuggled goods, the DCCI president observed. "We do not have appropriate anti-dumping and countervailing laws and measures to safeguard domestic industry."

Devaluation alone is unlikely to improve the competitive strength of Bangladesh's export, he added.

He said to enhance the economy's competitive strength, the policy-instruments should address the real problems that deny domestic producers a level

Rahman put forward a 14-point recommendation to help increase exports. The suggestions include making all export income tax-free, establishment of an export development fund, providing special exchange rate and financial assistance.

Other recommendations include product diversification, strengthening transport and port facilities, green channel facilities at ports, improvement of law and order, awareness about WTO system and international trade requirements, capacity building and human resource development, access to information network, introduction of development bond and forging regional cooperation.

Chaired by Prof. Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the discussion meeting was addressed among others by BGMEA president Anisur Rahman Sinha, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) president Mahubul Jamil, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) president Mahubul Rahman, Bangladesh Textile Mills' Association (BTMA) president Salman F. Rahman, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) vice-chairman Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, North-South University (NSU) pro-vice chancellor Dr Hafiz G A Siddiqi, ICC-B Vice President Abdur Rob Chowdhury and past president Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) R Maksud Khan.

Int'l standard English medium college in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, June 6: An international standard English medium college will be established at Dohazari, thirty miles off here, at an estimated cost of Taka 100 crore under private initiative, reports BSS.

This was disclosed by Chairman of Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) Zafar Ahmad Chowdhury while talking to local journalists today. He said that works on the proposed educational institution will start in December. He said that the English medium college will also have a school section.

Zafar Ahmad Chowdhury, who is also Chairman of United Commercial Bank Ltd, said that one hundred acres of land would be purchased for the proposed English medium school and college. "We have purchased twenty acres by now," he added.

He said that experienced teachers would be appointed from home and abroad to ensure standard and quality of education.

Zafar Ahmad also said that United Commercial Bank would finance the English medium school and college project.



Mabubul Haq Snrity Sangsad held a discussion meeting to mark the death anniversary of noted labour leader, journalist and parliamentarian Mabubul Haq at the auditorium of Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday. — Star photo